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SITUATION(S) MESSAGE(S) LISTING

DATE 06/20/74//171

SITUATION: HAK TRIP
 SUBJECT CATEGORY: TOHAK

MESSAGE / ANNOTATION:

MESSAGE:

IMMEDIATE

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THE NICK THIMMESCH COLUMN

RELEASE DATE: TUESDAY, JUNE 11, 1974

KISSINGER GETS WATERGATE FUNGUS

BY NICK THIMMESCH

WASHINGTON--HENRY A. KISSINGER, OUR SECRETARY OF STATE IN A SLIGHTLY FADED SUPERMAN SUIT, IS THE LATEST VICTIM OF THE WATERGATE FUNGUS, BUT THEN HE'S ASKED FOR IT. HE IS BEING HOUNDED TO EXPLAIN HIS TRUE ROLE IN THE WIRETAPPING OF HIS STAFF MEMBERS AND NEWSMEN AND WHATEVER HE KNOWS ABOUT THE WHITE HOUSE "PLUMBERS."

LAST SEPTEMBER, UNDER OATH BEFORE CHAIRMAN J.W. FULBRIGHT'S SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE, KISSINGER TESTIFIED THAT HE DID NOT INITIATE THE WIRETAPS, NOR DID HE HAVE ANY KNOWLEDGE OF THE PLUMBERS OR OF WHAT HIS AIDE, DAVID YOUNG, WAS DOING WITH THE PLUMBERS AFTER LEAVING KISSINGER'S STAFF.

MANY EYEBROWS WERE RAISED AT THAT TESTIMONY. AFTER ALL, WILLIAM RUCKELSHAUS, WHEN HE WAS THE ACTING HEAD OF THE FBI, REVEALED ON MAY 14, 1973, THAT IT WAS INDEED KISSINGER WHO TOOK PART IN THE INITIAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR FBI SURVEILLANCE OF THE STAFFERS AND NEWSMEN. LATER, IT WAS DEVELOPED THAT KISSINGER AND ALEXANDER HAIG, WHEN HE WAS KISSINGER'S DEPUTY, SUPPLIED THE NAMES OF THOSE TAPPED TO THE FBI.

SINCE SEN. FULBRIGHT WAS COZY WITH KISSINGER AT THAT POINT, AND SINCE THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE LOOKED LIKE

***** WHSR COMMENTS *****

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A WORLD'S CHAMPIONSHIP SLEEPING SOCIETY, NOTHING IMMEDIATE CAME OF KISSINGER'S BOTHERSOME TESTIMONY.

SO THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS, THE PUBLIC AND MOST OF THE PRESS WENT AWAY FROM THE HEARING BELIEVING THAT, AT MOST, HENRY KISSINGER PLAYED A MINOR, EVEN PASSIVE, ROLE IN THE WIRETAPPING EPISODE AND WAS TOTALLY IGNORANT OF THE PLUMBER'S OPERATION.

BUT SUBSEQUENTLY, KISSINGER, UNDER QUESTIONING AT A PRESS CONFERENCE, ADMITTED THAT HE HAD LISTENED TO A TAPE RECORDING MADE BY HIS FORMER AIDE, DAVID YOUNG, BY NOW A PLUMBER, OF ADM. ROBERT WELANDER, AS PART OF AN INVESTIGATION OF LEAKS FROM THE WHITE HOUSE.

SO EYEBROWS WENT UP AGAIN, AND SO DID KISSINGER, TO CAPITOL HILL, WHERE HE MET IN EXECUTIVE SESSION WITH THE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE ON JAN 29, 1974, TO "CLARIFY" HIS TESTIMONY ON THE PLUMBERS.

CHAIRMAN FULBRIGHT EMERGED FROM THAT MEETING WITH A PROMISE THAT A SANITIZED VERSION OF THE TESTIMONY WOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE LATER, BUT IT NEVER CAME AND, IN THIS TOWN WHERE MEMORIES ARE SHORTER AND SHORTER, PEOPLE FORGET.

WHAT HAPPENED WAS THAT THE TRANSCRIPT OF THAT JAN 9 MEETING WAS FORWARDED, AT KISSINGER'S REQUEST, TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT WHERE IT WAS SANITIZED TO SUCH A DEGREE THAT FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE STAFFERS DECIDED NOT TO RELEASE IT.

IT WAS SO FULL OF DELETIONS THAT IT LOOKED LIKE A SWISS CHEESE.

MEANWHILE, AS WATERGATE WORE ON AND ON AND IMPEACHMENT BECAME THE ISSUE, THERE WERE MUTTERINGS THAT KISSINGER HAD BECOME A SACRED COW. JOURNALISTS BEGAN BLAMING EACH OTHER FOR LETTING KISSINGER OFF THE HOOK AND VOWED TO PRESS HIM WITH QUESTIONS ON HIS SWORN, AND EXECUTIVE SESSION, TESTIMONY. IF KISSINGER LIED BEFORE THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE, THAT'S PERJURY, AND PERJURY IS BEING CHASED IN THIS TOWN LIKE DOGS IN HEAT.

SO WHEN KISSINGER HELD HIS FIRST PRESS CONFERENCE SINCE RETURNING FROM HIS MIDDLE EAST TRIUMPHS, HE WAS GREETED WITH A BARRAGE OF TOUGH QUESTIONS WHICH EVENTUALLY MADE HIM LOSE HIS COOL AND PROTEST THAT HE WOULDN'T BE SUBJECTED TO CROSS-EXAMINATION. SUPERMAN'S SUIT SHRUNK A BIT.

THE EVIDENCE IS CLEAR THAT KISSINGER PLAYED MORE THAN A PASSIVE ROLE IN THE WIRETAPPING OF HIS STAFF AND NEWSMEN. BUT IT MUST BE ADDED THAT THIS SUEVILLANCE WAS LEGAL AT THE TIME, AND THAT KISSINGER WAS ONLY RESPONDING TO A VALID CONCERN ABOUT LEAKS.

IT IS HARD TO BELIEVE KISSINGER'S ARGUMENTS THAT HE HAD NO KNOWLEDGE OF THE PLUMBERS WHEN THEY WERE ORGANIZED IN RESPONSE

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TO HIS COMPLAINTS ABOUT SECURITY LEAKS IN 1971, PARTICULARLY THOSE INVOLVING DANIEL ELLSBERG AND THE PENTAGON PAPERS. AGAIN, IN URGING THAT THOSE LEAKS BE PLUGGED BY AN INTERNAL SECURITY UNIT, LATER NICKNAMED THE PLUMBERS, KISSINGER WAS RESPONDING TO A VALID CONCERN.

WHAT'S SAD IS THAT KISSINGER, A BRILLIANT MAN, DID NOT STAND UP A LONG TIME AGO AND DEFEND ACTIONS HE WAS INVOLVED WITH, AS HIS DUTY. WHATEVER WRONG CAME OUT OF WIRETAPPING OR PLUMBERS COULD HARDLY BE LAID TO HIM, FOR HE CERTAINLY DIDN'T ORDER CRIMINALITY.

WE HAVE NOT HEARD THE END OF THIS, ALTHOUGH KISSINGER BEING OUT OF THE COUNTRY IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND MOSCOW TRIPS MIGHT SERVE TO COOL THE SITUATION.

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